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SUBJECT: UNHCR: EXCOM CABLE #2: PRM ACTING A/S GREENE,S
MEETING WITH HIGH COMMISSIONER GUTERRES

REF: GENEVA 2465

1. (U) Summary: On the margins of the 56th Session of the UNHCR Executive Committee (EXCOM), PRM Acting A/S Greene previewed our priorities for the week-long session with UN High Commissioner for Refugees Guterres. They included improving UNHCR's approach to durable solutions, management reform, emergency response and camp management, and clarifying UNHCR's role with internally displaced persons. Greene pressed Guterres to "be out in front" on refugee issues and to drive home durable solutions. By doing so, Guterres could have a positive impact on governments, willingness to provide diplomatic muscle and financial support to UNHCR's efforts. Greene also pressed for strong UNHCR cooperation to meet President Bush's commitment to resettle 70,000 refugees in 2006 -- a 30 percent increase over FY 2005 figures. End summary.

2. (U) PRM Acting A/S Rich Greene, joined by Ambassador Moley; USAID DCHA Deputy Assistant Administrator Bill Garvelink; DHS/CIS Director of Refugee, Asylum and International Operations Director Joe Cuddihy; PRM/MCE Director Margaret Pollack; and RMA Counselor Piper Campbell, met with UN High Commissioner Antonio Guterres, Deputy High Commissioner Wendy Chamberlin, and Americas Bureau Director Philippe Lavanchy October 3 to discuss a wide range of issues important to the USG-UNHCR working relationship. Greene encouraged the High Commissioner (HC) to use EXCOM as a springboard to implementing his agenda for change.

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

3. (SBU) Greene told Guterres that while many questions remained about implementing the proposed "cluster lead" approach to IDPs, the U.S. welcomed UNHCR's recognition that they have significant technical expertise to offer and appreciated the HC's commitment to make UNHCR a more predictable partner. Guterres responded that he was aware of and shared many of the USG concerns. During the difficult negotiations leading up to the September 12 IASC Principals meeting, he made it clear that UNHCR would not take a cluster lead in natural disasters situations. It also would not take the lead in protection, camp management or emergency shelter (a) in places where these activities could undermine the institution of asylum or UNHCR's protection role, (b) if resources were not forthcoming, or (c) where the existing response was working or other actors had greater capabilities. He emphasized that UNHCR's leadership role should provide added value to an IDP response.

Durable Solutions: Bhutan/Nepal and Sudan

4. (SBU) Commenting that some of the USDEL's best work would be done in the numerous bi-lateral meetings occurring on the margins of EXCOM, Greene said that the USG would push for progress on durable solutions, including in several meetings on Bhutan/Nepal and protracted refugee situations in Africa. Guterres recounted his recent conversations with the Ambassadors of India and Nepal, noting that India may grant UNHCR full status and discreetly put pressure on Nepal and Bhutan to reach a durable solution. Guterres said Nepal understands that the international community wants Nepal to create the conditions for progress. He had pressed the Ambassador to allow UNHCR to conduct a registration among the Bhutanese refugee population. If the Bhutan-Nepal recent commitment to address category one and four refugees started off well, Guterres said, interested countries may have a more open attitude for further cooperation. Greene encouraged Guterres to drive forward the small opening that now exists. With regard to Sudan, Guterres expressed great worry, commenting that the window of opportunity for a political solution was closing. Upcoming meetings were critical to bring the splintering factions together.

Management Reform: Looking for Progress

5. (SBU) Greene emphasized that the U.S. was looking for progress on management reform issues, including emergency response, camp management, human resources policies, use of technology, and creating a culture of accountability.

Guterres acknowledged all these priorities, but focused on human resource reform as key to success in the other areas. He cited UNHCR,s inability to manage its Burundi activities as an example of existing rigid personnel policies. He said that UNHCR Director for Human Resources and Management Raymond Hall was preparing 2-3 reform documents that would soon be discussed by senior management. Referring to the use of technology, Guterres said that UNHCR has the right people in place (e.g., the newly created results-based management unit), but that change will take time and that good technology use is dependent on good management. Guterres has requested a report on global management initiatives that, by early 2006, should lay out minimum standards for managers and short-term, measurable objectives.

Emergency Response and Camp Management/Coordination

16. (SBU) Guterres was quite optimistic that his human resources reform efforts would have a positive impact on UNHCR,s emergency response capacity. Previewing what he later announced during EXCOM, Guterres praised the work of Emergency Services and Security (ESS) chief Arnaud Akodjenue.

He said his decision to make Akodjenue the head of the Division of Operational Support (DOS) -- replacing Marjan Kamara, whom Guterres has asked to head the Africa Bureau -- is meant to integrate an emergency response mind-set into UNHCR,s operations. On camp management and coordination, again referring to the new IDP cluster lead approach, Guterres said that the new approach compels UNCHR to define what camp management means. UNHCR,s responsibilities as cluster lead would entail setting standards for camp management and "guaranteeing" that agencies managed camps to that standard, coming in as last resort only when necessary. Guterres said UN Emergency Relief Coordinator Jan Egeland was a committed advocate for resource mobilization among donors for these new activities. UNHCR would draw from the CERF for early start-up costs and would appeal for funds in Consolidated Appeal (CAP) documents. Guterres commented that if governments have certain expectations of UNHCR in responding to IDP needs (e.g., Liberia), they need to commit resources to allow UNHCR to meet those expectations.

Comment

17. (U) It remains evident from both the frankness and tone of the discussion that the new High Commissioner has the skills and intellectual energy to re-focus UNHCR,s work and push durable solutions. UNHCR,s leadership in resolving the decades-old Nepal/Bhutan situation will be a test case for the kind of agency Guterres wants to create: an agency that can mobilize routinely not only an effective and efficient staff response, but the necessary diplomatic and financial support from governments to cement real international solutions and resolve long-standing refugee situations. End comment.

18. (U) Acting A/S Greene cleared this cable.
Cassel